



# CYBER SAFETY

THIS MONTH'S RECOGNITION OF CYBER SAFETY AIMS TO BRING AWARENESS TO THE DANGERS OUR CHILDREN FACE AWAY FROM THE STREETS AND IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD ONLINE. EVERY DAY CHILDREN USE SOCIAL MEDIA SITES, SMART PHONE APPS OR CHAT ROOMS. THIS PUTS THEM AT RISK OF BECOMING PREY TO A LARGE COMMUNITY OF CHILD PREDATORS SOMETIMES DISGUISED AS OTHER CHILDREN OR A CONCERNED ADULT "FRIEND." THESE PREDATORS AIM TO GAIN THE VULNERABLE CHILD'S TRUST IN ORDER TO DRAW THEM FROM THE SAFETY OF THEIR HOME TO BECOME VICTIMS OF THEIR DEVIOS FANTASIES.

The attorney general's Child Exploitation Unit works diligently to take these predators offline and into jail cells away from the children of Texas. This month's initiative is to inform the public on how to keep children safe online and how you can help law enforcement take child predators off the streets. If you suspect anyone of engaging with children online inappropriately or in possession of or promoting child pornography contact the National Center of Missing and Exploited Children to report such illegal activities.

## HOW CAN I HELP?

Knowledge is power. The Internet is a great source for entertainment and information, unfortunately it is also where predators go to exploit children. Educate yourself and your children about Internet safety. Recognize the dangers that children face every day they access the Internet through one of the many electronic devices accessible to them. Predatory tactics are evolving with technology and many of them utilize sextortion and live-streaming to conduct child sex abuse. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) created an online program to teach kids and adults how to be safe online. Visit them at [www.netsmartzkids.org](http://www.netsmartzkids.org).

Talk to your children, nieces and/or nephews; anyone of adolescent age in your life about the dangerous threats online. Set ground rules and establish clear expectations about their Internet use and online behavior. Monitor and review what applications or websites your child is using. Identify who their friends and/or followers are and monitor what kind of content is being shared with your child.

Let your child know that if at any time they see or receive inappropriate content, they can always talk to you. Remember, you can report instances of online enticement of children for sexual acts, extra-familial child sexual molestation, child pornography, child sex tourism, child sex





trafficking, unsolicited obscene materials sent to a child, misleading domain names, and misleading words or digital images on the Internet to the NCMEC's CyberTipline at <http://www.missingkids.com/CyberTipline>.

If your child is a teenager, maintain open communication with them. Let them know about what content is acceptable and what is not. Advise them that inappropriate posts can have serious consequences and may get them in trouble at school and/or with the police.

## **SEXTORTION**

According to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), sextortion is a form of online sexual exploitation predators use to blackmail, groom, entice, coerce, lure, or extort their victims into complying with their demands for sexually natured images and videos of themselves. Once received, these files are kept for personal satisfaction and/or traded with other predators online. A single victim's images or videos could be shared with thousands of predators in a series based on that child.

Many sextortion offenders admitted to posing as the child's peer of a similar age to gain their trust in order to elicit sexually explicit photos from them. Once an image is received, the predator will often threaten to publicize the photo in order to exploit the victim into sending more photos or manipulate the victim into abusing a younger sibling or friend. The DOJ also reports that sextortion is the fastest growing threat to children (typically ages 10-17) and that it has the highest number of child victims per offender than all other child sexual exploitation offense.

## **HOW CAN CHILDREN STAY SAFE?**

Talk to your child and teach them on what they can and cannot post online and help them understand which type of conversations are appropriate and inappropriate. Children should be reminded that they should think before they post because there is such a thing as sharing too much information and once you send out a message there is no way to get it back. Ensure they know that whomever they chat with online could be dangerous and not who they say they are.

Children should know to tell a trusted adult if they see or receive any inappropriate content. Develop an action plan with your child on how to react if they see something that is inappropriate or makes them feel uncomfortable. Let them know they should close the screen or use the back button if they come across an inappropriate website and/or content.

## **CHALLENGES LAW ENFORCEMENT FACE**

Today's modern world hosts endless possibilities for staying connected globally. While this is progressive for society as a whole, offenders exploit such advances to harm children all across the world. Law enforcement agencies have been aware of this dilemma and work diligently every day to combat this heinous threat to children. However, with each headway law enforcement makes, predators are developing new ways of hiding their despicable acts from public view by using anonymization networks like Tor and encrypting all materials they obtain and move through the web. According to an FBI analysis, approximately 1.3 million images of children being violently sexually abused were found on a website on Tor.





Online is a place for predators to validate their unthinkable urges and come together as a supportive community for their vile and illegal acts of viewing and producing child pornography and sexually exploiting children. These "underground" communities share practices to impede law enforcement as well as share techniques of exploiting and cohering child victims.

### WHAT IS THE CHILD EXPLOITATION UNIT?

The Child Exploitation Unit (CEU) was introduced in 2003 as a result of the heightened awareness of one of the most dangerous threats that our children face online, and to address the limited resources law enforcement has to fight this growing danger. The CEU proactively investigates and responds to complaints of online child pornography and child predators who commit sex crimes against children using technology and the Internet. They are affiliated with the United States Department of Justice's Internet Crime Against Children (ICAC) Task Force. The attorney general's CEU is one of three ICAC Task Forces in Texas; the other two being the Dallas and Houston Police departments.

### WHAT LAWS PROTECT OUR CHILDREN ONLINE?

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) was put in place to protect children's personal information on websites and online services including apps that are directed to

children under 13. The Rule also applies to a general audience site that knows it is collecting personal information from kids that age. COPPA requires those sites and services to notify parents directly and get their approval before they collect, use, or disclose a child's personal information. To learn more about COPPA visit the Federal Trade Commission at <http://bit.ly/1IJZNI0>.

U.S. Code 2258A covers requirements of electronic communication service providers and remote computing service provider to notify the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's (NCMEC) CyberTipline if a user commits a child pornography offense. NCMEC then forwards the report to law enforcement.

Texas Penal Code 33.021 makes it illegal to solicit anyone under the age of 17 (a minor), or anyone the offender believes to be under the age of 17, online for sexual contact or have sexually explicit communication with a minor, or someone they believe to be a minor.

Texas Penal Code 43.26 makes possessing or promoting child pornography illegal.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

Federal Trade Commission (to learn about COPPA) <http://bit.ly/1IJZNI0>

NCMEC online program [www.netsmartzkids.org](http://www.netsmartzkids.org)

NCMEC's CyberTipline online [www.missingkids.com/CyberTipline](http://www.missingkids.com/CyberTipline)

NCMEC's CyberTipline (800) 843-5678

